

REMARKS

Claims 1-16 and 37-42 are pending and claims 17-36 and 43-50 are withdrawn in this application. By this Amendment, claims 10-16 are amended. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

The Office Action objects to the drawings. Claims 13 and 14 are amended in order to overcome the objection to the drawings. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection to the drawings is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 13 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. The claims are amended to overcome the rejection, and now fulfill the requirements of 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-16 under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) over Shima (U.S. Patent No. 6,940,615); and claims 37-42 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Shima in view of Sakaguchi (JP 2000-132354). The rejections are respectfully traversed.

In particular, none of the applied references, alone or in combination, disclose or suggest the features of independent claims 1, 4, 7, 9-16, 37, 39 and 41 for the reasons explained below.

Shima teaches a high function printer that examines the performance attributes of downstream low function printers and stores the thus examined performance (Abstract). Moreover, Shima teaches that the network compatible printer 51 has a function of examining the performance attributes of the downstream network in compatible printers, and of transferring a print job received from the host 54 to the downstream network incompatible printers (col. 23, lines 22-42), and obtains and stores the setting items such as a print color, a resolution, and a paper size, and also the range of the settings (col. 23, line 63-col. 24, line 18). Moreover, Shima also teaches determining whether the printer 51 can perform the

print job, and prints the job if the determination is made, or checks the performance attributes of the downstream network incompatible printers and transfers the print job to a downstream networking compatible printer if the printer 51 cannot perform the print job (col. 24, line 40-col. 25-line 2; Figs. 14 and 15). However, although Shima teaches that the performance attributes of all the printers are displayed (Figs. 17a-17b and window 60), Shima fails to disclose or suggest performing a logical operation of the attributes satisfying a designated condition, as recited in independent claim 1 and similarly recited in independent claims 4, 7 and 9. Moreover, Shima fails to disclose or suggest displaying attribute information common to all image output devices satisfying a designated condition, as recited in independent claims 4, 7 and 9. A designated condition can be, for example, a logical sum (or) of attribute information of the printers belonging to the group for a best matching method, or a logical product (and) of attribute information of the printers belonging to the group. Support for this feature can be found in the specification at, for example, page 69, line 18-page 73, line 2.

In contrast, Shima teaches teaching the performance attribute of the all of the printers (Figs. 17A-17B and window 60), and does not teach displaying all the attribute information of plural image output devices satisfying a designated condition, and also does not teach displaying the attribute information common to the plural image output devices satisfying the designated condition.

For at least these reasons, Shima fails to disclose or suggest the features of independent claims 1, 4, 7 and 9.

Furthermore, Shima fails to disclose or suggest the user interface device that includes an operation screen displaying only attribute information of the image output devices for selection which are determined to be available for image output each time the operation screen is displayed, as recited in independent claim 10, and similarly recited in independent

claims 11, 13 and 15. Shima also fails to disclose or suggest an image input device that includes a plurality of image input devices and an image output managing device connected to a network that checks whether the image output devices are available for image output each time an operation screen is displayed, as recited in independent claims 11, 13 and 15. Support for these features can be found in the specification at, for example, page 90, lines 1-2.

Shima teaches that the printer 51 tracks the performance attributes of the downstream network incompatible printers and whether the received print job can be performed (col. 24, lines 51-57), and Shima also teaches a server that converts a first status message received to a second status message (col. 4, lines 11-15). However, Shima fails to disclose or suggest that each time an operation screen is displayed, the system checks whether the image output devices are available for image output. Shima also fails to teach disclosing only attribute information of the image output devices which are determined to be available, and thus the operation screen in Shima does display attribute information of output devices which are not available for image output. Accordingly, Shima fails to disclose or suggest the features of independent claims 10, 11, 13 and 15.

Moreover, Shima fails to disclose or suggest an image input device and associated input managing device and image output system that includes an image data input device, a display input device, and a transceiver connect to a network that requests status checks during predetermined operation of the operation screen, and that transmits to the display input device a signal for displaying an error or an alert information on the operation screen when an image output device which is not available for image output is designated, as recited in independent claims 12, 14 and 16. Support for this feature can be found in the specification at, for example, page 86, line 2-page 88, line 12.

Although Shima teaches that the host 54 obtains and displays the performance attributes of the printers, Shima fails to teach having a signal for displaying an error or alert information on the operation screen when an image output device which is not available for image output is designated. In other words, Shima cannot prevent jobs from being sent to output devices that are not available. Although Shima teaches that if the printer 51 determines that the printer cannot perform the print job, the printer 51 checks the performance attributes of any of the other printers 52, 53, and the like, and determines whether or not the received job can be received in light of the performance attributes of the printers (col. 24, lines 47-57). However, Shima fails to teach displaying an error or alert message if a printer that is not available for printing receives a print job. Thus, Shima fails to disclose or suggest the features of independent claims 12, 14 and 16.

For at least these reasons, Shima fails to disclose or suggest the features of independent claims 1, 4, 7 and 9-16. Accordingly, independent claims 1, 4, 7 and 9-16, and their dependent claims, are patentable over Shima.

With respect to the rejection of claims 37-42, the Office Action admits that Shima does not disclose a group registering method, grouping the image output devices searched on the basis of information for group instruction and registration of the image output devices (Office Action, page 19, lines 4-6), as recited in independent claims 37, 39, 41 and 42, and relies on Sakaguchi to disclose or render obvious these features. However, Applicants respectfully disagree.

Sakaguchi teaches a method of facilitating an operation for processing one printing job with plural printers in parallel (Problem to be Solved). Sakaguchi also teaches that an operator chooses a plurality of desired printers as a printer group (paragraph [0016]; Fig. 3). Thus, when the operator in Sakaguchi specifies any of the printer groups, the throughput of the printers in the printer group and a sum of the throughput of the printer group are displayed

(paragraphs [0017]-[0018]; Fig. 4). Accordingly, Sakaguchi fails to disclose or suggest searching output devices for output devices that satisfy a search condition, and Sakaguchi also fails to disclose or suggest registering image output devices as a group and grouping the image output devices searched on the basis of information for group instruction and registration of the image output devices, as recited in independent claim 37 and similarly recited in independent claims 39, 41 and 42. Thus, independent claims 37, 39, 41 and 42, and their dependent claims, are patentable over a combination of Shima and Sakaguchi.

For at least these reasons, independent claims 1, 4, 7, 9-16, 37, 39, 41 and 42, and their dependent claims, are patentable over a combination of the applied references. Thus, withdrawal of the rejections of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §102(a) and 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-16 and 37-42 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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